geographical area of the State. The National Forest Policy, 1988 aims at having a minimum of one third of geographical area of the country under forest or tree cover and enjoins maintaining two-third of the area in the hills and in mountainous regions under forest cover in order to prevent erosion and land degradation to ensure the stability of the fragile eco-system.

(b) The Ministry of Environment and Forests have already issued guidelines for regularisation of pre-1980 eligible encroachment of forest lands.

Notified forest area in Gujarat

591. DR. A.K. PATEL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any notified forest area in the State of Gujarat;

(b) if so, the complete details thereof;

(c) whether Government have taken any steps to preserve the forest area in Gujarat; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV): (a) and (b)Yes, Sir. The details of forest area in the State of Gujarat are as follows:

Reserved forest	14155.18 sq. Kms.
Protected forest	394.85 sq. Kms.
Unclassed forest	4562.51 sq. Kms.
Total forest area	19112.54 sq. Kms.

(c) & (d) Yes, Sir. The State Government has taken various steps for preservation of forests which include deployment of 27 Mobile squads and 7 Striking forces, 153 Checking Nakas established all over the State in sensitive areas, a well established communication network with wireless and walkie talkie sets established of effective communication, arms provided to the field protection stafff or self

defence, and 1417 Joint Forest Management (JFM) committees involved actively in forest protection.

Selling of forest Land in Mumbai

592. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the news-item titled "20 Mumbai estates built on forest scam land" appeared in the media recently;

(b) if so, what are the details of forests land, the use of which has been converted into residential and commercial at Thane and Pune districts of Maharashtra;

(c) how much forest land has been sold off a Sahara Group of Companies for commercial activity and at what price;

(d) whether the Government of Maharashtra obtained the permission of Central Government for converting and selling forest land into Commercial/residential purposes; and

(e) it not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV): (a) Yes, Sir, as per information received from Government of Maharashtra such news-item appeared in the daily, "The Asian Age' on 4th June, 2003.

(b) As intimated by the State Government it is not true that 20 Mumbai estates have been built on the forest land in Thane and Pune districts as mentioned in the news-item. The concerned village Chichwan is located in Panvel Taluka of Raigad district and not in Thane or Pune district. The Forest Department had acquired these lands under the relevant sections of Indian Forest Act, 1927 and Maharashtra Private Forest (Acquisition) Act, 1975. However, the Deputy Collector, Panvel restored some land back to the owners but the major land owner, Metropolitan Land Finance Corporation, filed Writ Petition in the High Court of Mumbai against the acquisition of land and the writ was allowed. Though the SLP filed by the State in the Supreme Court was dismissed